CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name:	USFS Sterling & Cliff Alternative Practice
Proposed Implementation Date:	November 2019
Proponent:	US Forest Service
Location:	Sections 17 & 30, T33N R27W
County:	Lincoln

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

To allow the operation of a tracked feller-buncher to operated inside of eight class 3 SMZs to within 15feet of Ordinary High Water Mark (OHWM) under winter conditions. The proposed action would allow the feller-buncher to harvest fire killed timber safely eliminating risk to sawyer and eliminating chance for deposition of slash into the water course. This AP would make feasible the safe and cost-effective harvesting of the approximately 4.5 acres within these class 3 SMZs.

II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

1. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT, AGENCIES, GROUPS OR INDIVIDUALS CONTACTED:

Provide a brief chronology of the scoping and ongoing involvement for this project. List number of individuals contacted, number of responses received, and newspapers in which notices were placed and for how long. Briefly summarize issues received from the public.

No adjacent landowners are expected to be affected by the proposal, so public scoping was not deemed necessary.

2. OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES WITH JURISDICTION, LIST OF PERMITS NEEDED:

Examples: cost-share agreement with U.S. Forest Service, 124 Permit, 3A Authorization, Air Quality Major Open Burning Permit.

None

3. ALTERNATIVE DEVELOPMENT:

Describe alternatives considered and, if applicable, provide brief description of how the alternatives were developed. List alternatives that were considered but eliminated from further analysis and why.

No action alternative: Do not issue AP. This would cause the landowner to either forego the volume that is within these units or require hand falling which exposes a sawyer to extreme safety risks in the burn salvage and the likelihood of slash being deposited into the water course is high from trees that don't always fall where they're supposed to fall.

Action alternative: Issue AP that allows feller-buncher to be operated within the class 3 SMZ from 50 to 15 feet (they can reach from the 15 foot to the OHWM) under winter conditions.

III. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

- *RESOURCES potentially impacted are listed on the form, followed by common issues that would be considered.*
- *Explain POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATIONS following each resource heading.*
- *Enter "NONE" If no impacts are identified or the resource is not present.*

4. GEOLOGY AND SOIL QUALITY, STABILITY AND MOISTURE:
Consider the presence of fragile, compactable or unstable soils. Identify unusual geologic features. Specify any special reclamation considerations. Identify direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to soils.

Kootenai Land Type 352; this soil type is glaciated mountain slope capable of high timber productivity yet is susceptible to moderate erosion along skid trails and fire lines in areas where soil material has been exposed (as is the case with this past fire).

5. WATER QUALITY, QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION:
Identify important surface or groundwater resources. Consider the potential for violation of ambient water quality standards, drinking water maximum contaminant levels, or degradation of water quality. Identify direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to water resources.

The proposed harvest unit developed multiple streams after the first spring run-off post 2018 fire. These streams flow less than six months per year and do not contribute surface flow to another stream lake or other body of water. While this area is at the headwaters of Cliff Creek, there does not appear to any potential for impacts to water quality, quantity or distribution. Under winter conditions no ground disturbance is expected.

6. AIR QUALITY:
What pollutants or particulate would be produced (i.e. particulate matter from road use or harvesting, slash pile burning, prescribed burning, etc)? Identify the Airshed and Impact Zone (if any) according to the Montana/Idaho Airshed Group. Identify direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to air quality.

Normal air pollution that is associated with a standard logging operation.

7. VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY:
What changes would the action cause to vegetative communities? Consider rare plants or cover types that would be affected. Identify direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to vegetation.

No rare, sensitive plants or cover types were observed during ground reconnaissance. Minimal vegetation disturbance would occur from logging under winter conditions. The timbered overstory would be harvested down to 5-10 trees per acre.

8. TERRESTRIAL, AVIAN AND AQUATIC LIFE AND HABITATS:
Consider substantial habitat values and use of the area by wildlife, birds or fish. Identify direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to fish and wildlife.

The site of the proposed alternative practice shows no significant use by wildlife birds or fish.

9. UNIQUE, ENDANGERED, FRAGILE OR LIMITED ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES:
Consider any federally listed threatened or endangered species or habitat identified in the project area. Determine effects to wetlands. Consider Sensitive Species or Species of special concern. Identify direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to these species and their habitat.

Threated or endangered species such as lynx and grizzly bears may migrate through the area. There were no denning sites noted on the property. The proposed AP should not diminish habitat elements for these species.

10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:
Identify and determine direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to historical, archaeological or paleontological resources.

No historical, archaeological or paleontological resources were observed during field reconnaissance nor are any known by the landowner.

11. AESTHETICS:

Determine if the project is located on a prominent topographic feature, or may be visible from populated or scenic areas. What level of noise, light or visual change would be produced? Identify direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to aesthetics.

Normal temporary noise increase associated with logging operations and the prescription for harvest within the class 3 SMZs would match the rest of the unit's prescription.

12. DEMANDS ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES OF LAND, WATER, AIR OR ENERGY:

Determine the amount of limited resources the project would require. Identify other activities nearby that the project would affect. Identify direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to environmental resources.

No limited resources will be used for this project. There are no other activities nearby that will affect the project.

13. OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTS PERTINENT TO THE AREA:

List other studies, plans or projects on this tract. Determine cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of current private, state or federal actions in the analysis area, and from future proposed state actions in the analysis area that are under MEPA review (scoped) or permitting review by any state agency.

USFS has the Tenmile Sterling EA for the fire salvage.

IV. IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION

- *RESOURCES potentially impacted are listed on the form, followed by common issues that would be considered.*
- *Explain POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATIONS following each resource heading.*
- *Enter "NONE" If no impacts are identified or the resource is not present.*

14. HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY:

Identify any health and safety risks posed by the project.

Normal health risks associated with a logging job. Extreme safety hazards would be present should the SMZ need to be hand felled.

15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:

Identify how the project would add to or alter these activities.

This project would add a minor amount of additional timber to the local wood products economy.

16. QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT:

Estimate the number of jobs the project would create, move or eliminate. Identify direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to the employment market.

This project would add several days of additional work and income to the local work force.

17. LOCAL AND STATE TAX BASE AND TAX REVENUES:

Estimate tax revenue the project would create or eliminate. Identify direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to taxes and revenue.

Minor additional income tax revenue would be generated from the additional work.

18. DEMAND FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES:
Estimate increases in traffic and changes to traffic patterns. What changes would be needed to fire protection, police, schools, etc.? Identify direct, indirect, and cumulative effects of this and other projects on government services

There would not be any affects to the local government services.

19. LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS:
List State, County, City, USFS, BLM, Tribal, and other zoning or management plans, and identify how they would affect this project.

There are no known zoning or management planning for this area.

20. ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF RECREATIONAL AND WILDERNESS ACTIVITIES:
Identify any wilderness or recreational areas nearby or access routes through this tract. Determine the effects of the project on recreational potential within the tract. Identify direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to recreational and wilderness activities.

This activity would have no impact to access or the the quality of recreational and wilderness opportunities for the public.

21. DENSITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION AND HOUSING:
Estimate population changes and additional housing the project would require. Identify direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to population and housing.

This activity would have no impact to density or distribution of population and housing.

22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES:
Identify potential disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities.

Logging is an activity that would be considered a traditional lifestyle for this community and area; this activity would not disrupt social structures.

23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY:
How would the action affect any unique quality of the area?

Cultural uniqueness and diversity would not be affected.

24. OTHER APPROPRIATE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES:
Estimate the return to the trust. Include appropriate economic analysis. Identify potential future uses for the analysis area other than existing management. Identify direct, indirect, and cumulative economic and social effects likely to occur as a result of the proposed action.

There are no known unique social or economic qualities on this site.

EA Checklist Prepared By:	**Name:**	Jeremy Rank	**Date:**	10/9/2019
	Title:	Service Forester		

V. FINDING

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

The action alternative is selected. Issue AP that would allow a feller-buncher to operate within the class 3 SMZs from 50 -15 feet from OHWM. Mitigations are operating under winter conditions and retain 5-10 trees per acre in the SMZ.

26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

The action alternative balances the safety hazards of hand falling within the SMZ with soil and water impacts from operating a feller-buncher within the SMZ. The application of proposed mitigations minimizes impacts while increasing safety of logging personnel.

27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

[ ]	EIS	[ ]	More Detailed EA	[x]	No Further Analysis

EA Checklist Approved By:	**Name:**	Douglas Turman
	Title:	Libby Unit Manager
Signature:	Douglas Turman	**Date:** 10/16/19

USFS Alternative Practice
T34N R27W sections 17 & 30